THE PROTAGORAS

COMMENT

Dramatic Introduction (309a–310a)

The scene is Athens. The date is approximately 435 B.C.,[1] in the sun-lit years before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. Socrates was then in his middle thirties, Pericles still alive and at the height of his power. Athens also was at her height, the most powerful city in Greece and the education of Hellas; the marble of her Acropolis, recently completed, gleamed like a jewel in the Mediterranean light. Plato, looking back on the scene from a vantage point of perhaps fifty years, is careful to let no shadow of things to come darken his portrait of what had been. The *Protagoras* is a sun-lit dialogue.

As the dialogue opens, Socrates is accosted by an unnamed friend who jocularly questions him about his relationship with the young Alcibiades. Socrates replies that he has just been with Alcibiades but paid him no heed; his attention was fixed on Protagoras of Abdera, who had come to Athens only two days before. Socrates has just left him, after a conversation Socrates now proceeds to narrate.

Narrative Introduction (310a–312b)

Socrates tells how Hippocrates, son of Apollodorus, knocked on his door that morning before first light to tell him that Protagoras has come to town. Hippocrates is so excited by the news and so eager to be introduced to him that the recent escape of one of his slaves occurs to him only as an afterthought.

1. The inference is based on the youth of Alcibiades (309a–b), who is just reaching manhood.

TRANSLATION

SOCRATES / UNNAMED COMPANION

Dramatic Introduction (309–310a)

309a COMP. Where from, Socrates? Hunting the vernal beauty of Alcibiades, no doubt? Well, I saw him just the other day, and he's looking still beautiful as a man, Socrates, but a man nonetheless, to speak among ourselves, and at this point getting quite a beard.

SOC. Well, what of it? You don't mean you disapprove of Homer,

b who said, "With beard new grown, the most graceful time for a youth"[1]—as Alcibiades is now.

COMP. How are things? Were you just with him? How's the lad disposed toward you?

SOC. Well disposed, I thought, especially today. Actually, he said many things in my behalf and helped me, and in fact I only just left him. But I'll tell you something surprising: though he was present, I paid no attention and often forgot he was there.

c COMP. Something serious has happened between you and him? For you surely haven't met anyone else handsomer, at least not in this city.

SOC. Yes, much handsomer.

COMP. What? Citizen or foreigner?

SOC. Foreigner.

COMP. Where from?

SOC. Abdera.

1. *Iliad* xxiv 348. Cf. *Odyssey* X 279.

COMP. And you thought a foreigner so handsome that he appeared handsomer to you than the son of Cleinias?

SOC. Won't the wisest appear most handsome, my friend?

COMP. You've just left someone wise?

d SOC. Surely the wisest of our generation, if you think Protagoras is wisest.

COMP. You mean Protagoras is in town?

SOC. For three days now.

COMP. So you've just come from being with him?

310a SOC. Yes, and said and heard many things.

COMP. Then unless something prevents, why not relate the conversation to us, Socrates? Sit down here, and let this slave get up.

SOC. Very well. Indeed, I'll be glad if you listen.

COMP. And I'll be glad if you speak.

SOC. Double delight, then. Please listen:

Narrative Introduction (310a–312b)

During this past night, just before dawn, Hippocrates son of Apollodorus, brother of Phason, knocked hard on my door with his
b staff, and when somebody opened it for him, he immediately came rushing in shouting, Socrates! Are you awake or asleep?

I recognized his voice and said, Here's Hippocrates! No bad news, I hope.

Nothing but good news, said he.

Excellent, I said. But what brings you here at this hour?

Protagoras has come, he said, standing beside me.

Yes, the day before yesterday, I said. You've only just found out?

By heavens, only last night, he said. And at that he groped for the bed and sat down by my foot and said: It was just last night. I
c got back quite late from Oenoe: my slave Satyrus ran off, you see, and of course I meant to tell you I was going after him, but for some reason it slipped my mind. When I got back and had supper and was about to go to bed, that's when my brother tells me Protagoras had come. And late as it was, I tried to come straight to you, but then I thought it was much too late; but as soon as sleep
d relieved my weariness, I got up immediately and came straight here.

And I said, discerning his manly agitation. What do you care? Protagoras hasn't done you a wrong, has he?

And he laughed. Heavens no, Socrates, he said. Except maybe that only he is wise and doesn't make me so.

Why of course he will, I said. If you give him money and persuade him, he'll make you wise too.

Zeus and gods! If it only depends on that! he said. Because I'd
e spare nothing that belongs to me or my friends. But that's just why I've come to you now, so you can speak to him in my behalf. I'm too young, and I've never even seen Protagoras or heard him; I was still a child when he last came to town. But everybody praises the
311a man, Socrates, and says he's extraordinarily wise in speaking. Why don't we walk to where he's at, so we can catch him at home? I heard he's staying with Callias, son of Hipponicus. Let's go.

And I said, Not yet, my friend—it's early. Instead, let's get up and walk around here in the courtyard to pass the time until it's light. Then we can go. As a matter of fact, Protagoras passes most of his time there, so cheer up, we'll very likely catch him at home.

After that, we got up and walked about in the courtyard, and I examined Hippocrates, questioning him to test his mettle. Tell
b me, Hippocrates, I said. You're now undertaking to go to Protagoras and pay him money for your tuition. Who are you going to, and what will you become? For example, suppose you intended to go to your namesake, Hippocrates of Cos, one of the Asclepiads,[2] and pay him money for your tuition, and someone
c asked, Tell me, Hippocrates, since you intended to pay a fee to Hippocrates, what is he? How would you answer?

I'd say he's a doctor, he replied.

And what will you become?

A doctor too, he said.

Suppose you intended to go to Polyclitus the Argive or Phidias the Athenian[3] and pay them tuition, and somebody asked you, What are Polyclitus and Phidias, that you intend to pay them money? How would you answer?

Sculptors, I'd reply.

And what will you become yourself?

A sculptor, clearly.

2. The "sons of Asclepius," a school of doctors in Cos and Cnidus. Hippocrates was born about 460 B.C. at Cos. His fame as a doctor was such that the surviving body of Greek medical works is ascribed to him, though none are known to have been written by him and many appear to date from a later time; this accords with the Greek practice of ascribing all discoveries of a school to its founder. See also *Phaedrus* 270c, where Hippocrates is offered as a paradigm of inquiry about the body.

3. Cf. *Meno* 91d.

Very well, said I. But now we're going to Protagoras, you and I,
d ready to pay him money in your behalf—our own money, if it suffices to persuade him, but if not we'll spend that of our friends. Suppose then someone should ask, since we're so intent on this, Tell me, Socrates and Hippocrates, what is Protagoras, that you intend to pay him money? How would we reply? What other name
e do we hear applied to Protagoras? We hear of Phidias that he's a sculptor and of Homer that he's a poet; what name of that kind do we hear of Protagoras?

Why, they call the man a sophist, Socrates, he said.

So we're going to pay money to him as a sophist?

Certainly.

312a Then suppose someone asked you in addition, What do you yourself intend to become by going to Protagoras?

He blushed even as he spoke—there was just enough daylight by then to see it: Clearly a sophist, he said, if it's at all like the previous examples.

Good heavens, I said. Wouldn't you be ashamed to hold yourself out among Greeks as a sophist?

Of course I would, Socrates, if I'm to say what I really think.

But perhaps after all, Hippocrates, you assume your instruc-
b tion from Protagoras won't be of this sort, but the kind you got from your writing master and music teacher and trainer. You learned each of those subjects not with a view to becoming a public practitioner of an art but for education, as befits a private citizen and a free man.

Of course, he said, I think that's more the kind of instruction one gets from Protagoras.

Sophistry and the Soul (312b–314c)

Then do you know what you're now intending to do, or does it escape you? I said.

About what?

You intend to put your own soul in the care of a man who is, as
c you say, a sophist. But I'd be surprised if you know just what a sophist is. And yet if you're ignorant of this, you don't know to whom you're entrusting your soul, or whether the thing is good or bad.

I at least think I know, he said.

Then say what you believe the sophist is.

I believe that as the name implies, he has knowledge of wise things, he replied.

Well, I replied, it's also possible to say of painters and builders that they have knowledge of wise things. But if someone asked us
d what wise things painters know, we'd surely reply that they know about the production of likenesses, and so in other cases. But if someone were to ask what wise things the sophist knows, what would we answer? Of what sort of work is he master?

What would we say he is, Socrates, except a master at making people speak cleverly?

Perhaps we'd be telling the truth, said I, but it's hardly enough, for our answer still requires a question: About what does the sophist make people speak cleverly? The musician surely makes
e people speak cleverly about what he also makes them know, namely, music. Not so?

Yes.

Very well. Then about what does the sophist make people speak cleverly?

Clearly, about that which he also makes them know?

Yes, very likely. But what is it about which the sophist has knowledge himself, and makes his pupil know?

Good lord, Socrates, I no longer can tell you.

313a And I said next, Really? Then do you know to what sort of danger you're going to subject your soul? If you had to entrust your body to someone and run the risk of it becoming better or worse, you'd consider very carefully whether or not you should do it; you'd summon your friends to counsel and inquire of your relatives for days on end. But about something you believe more important than the body, namely the soul, on which all that is yours depends for faring well or ill according as it becomes good or bad—about this you consult neither your father nor brother
b nor any of us who are your friends as to whether or not you should entrust your soul to this foreigner who has just arrived. On the contrary: you heard only last night, you say, yet you come before dawn, not to discuss the matter or seek advice about whether you should entrust yourself to him or not, but ready to spend your own money and that of your friends because you've already decided that you must at all costs study with Protagoras, whom you admit

c you don't know, and with whom you've never once talked. You call him a sophist, but you appear ignorant of what the sophist is to whom you are about to entrust yourself.

He heard this and said, It does seem so, Socrates, from what you say.

Well, Hippocrates, isn't the sophist a kind of merchant or huckster of wares by which the soul is fed?[4] He seems that way to me.

But what does a soul feed on, Socrates?

On learning, surely, I said. And we must beware, my friend, that the sophist not deceive us in praising what he sells, as mer-
d chants and hucksters do with food for the body. In fact, they don't know which among their wares are good or bad for the body, but they praise everything they sell; nor do those who buy of them know either, unless they happen to be physicians or trainers. It's the same way with these folk who tour our cities peddling knowledge to whomever desires it; they praise everything they sell, but perhaps some of them, dear friend, are ignorant whether the
e things they sell are good or bad for the soul. So too for those who buy from them, unless they also happen to be physicians of soul. So if you know what is good and bad, you can safely buy your knowledge from Protagoras and anyone else; but if you don't, look
314a to it, dear friend, lest you risk and hazard things of utmost value. In fact, the risk is actually much greater when you purchase knowledge than when you purchase food. For it's possible to buy food and drink from a huckster or merchant and carry it away in another container, and before taking it into your body by eating or drinking, it's possible to set it aside in your house and summon an expert to consult about what should be eaten and drunk and
b what should not, and how much, and when. So there's no great risk in the purchase. But learning cannot be carried away in another container. On the contrary, having paid the price, you necessarily take what is learned into your very soul, and depart either benefited or harmed. Let us then consider these things in company with our elders; for we are still too young to decide for ourselves a thing of such importance. Now, however, let's go and hear the man as we started out to do, and after we've heard him we'll also consult others. Actually, it's not only Protagoras who is
c here but Hippias of Elis and, I think, also Prodicus of Ceos, and many other wise men too.

4. Cf. *Sophist* 223c–224e, 231d.

A Foregathering of Sophists (314c–316b)

This seemed good to us and we set forth. When we arrived at the front door, we stood and discussed an argument which occurred to us on the way; so in order that it might not be unfinished but settled, we stood in front of the door before we went in discussing
d until we reached agreement. Well, I suppose the doorkeeper, a eunuch, overheard us, and very likely he was irritated at those who kept coming to the house because of the multitude of sophists. At any rate, when we knocked at the door, he opened it and saw us and said, Ho! Sophists! He's busy! And with that, he very spiritedly slammed the door shut with both hands as hard as he could.

We knocked again and he answered us through the closed door: Gentlemen, didn't you hear? He's busy.

e I replied, My good fellow, we haven't come to see Callias, and we're not sophists. So cheer up. We came because we need to see Protagoras. Please announce us.

Well, after some hesitation, the fellow opened the door for us.

When we entered, we found Protagoras walking up and down in the portico. Walking with him in a line there was, on one side,
315a Callias, son of Hipponicus, and his stepbrother Parolus, son of Pericles, and Charmides, son of Glaucon; on the other side, there was Pericles' other son, Xanthippus, and Philippides, son of Philomelus, and Antimoerus of Mende, the most highly regarded of Protagoras's pupils, who is learning the art with the purpose of becoming a sophist himself. Others followed along behind to hear what was being said; for the most part they appeared to be foreigners whom Protagoras had drawn from every city through
b which he'd passed, enchanting them with his voice like Orpheus while they, enchanted, follow wherever the voice may lead. But there were some of our own countrymen also in the chorus. It was a pleasure to see how careful that chorus was never to get in front of Protagoras or block him; on the contrary, when he and those with him turned, their followers somehow split their ranks in perfect order, this way and that, and wheeling in a circle, fell in behind him very beautifully every time.

"After him I was aware," as Homer says,[5] of Hippias of Elis,
c sitting on a kind of throne in the portico opposite; around him, seated on benches, were Eryximachus, son of Acumenus, and

5. *Odyssey* XII 601.

Phaedrus the Myrrhinousian, and Andron, son of Androtion, and some foreigners, his own fellow citizens and others. It appeared they were asking Hippias something about nature and things in the heavens having to do with astronomy,[6] while he, seated on his throne, distinguished their several questions and discussed them.

"And I saw Tantalus too"[7]—Prodicus was also in town, you
d know. He was in a room which Hipponicus used to use as a storeroom, but now, due to the multitude of guests, Callias had emptied it and made it into a guest room for visitors. Well, Prodicus was still in bed wrapped up in fleeces and blankets, quite a few of them, it appeared, and seated next to him on the neighboring beds was Pausanias of Cerameis, and with Pausanias was a young fellow, still a lad, noble and well born, I believe, and certainly very
e fair of form. I think I heard his name is Agathon, and I shouldn't be surprised if he's Pausanias's favorite. Well, this young fellow was there along with both Adeimantuses, the sons of Cepis and of Leucolophidas, and there appeared to be certain others too. From
316a the outside I couldn't tell what they were talking about, even though I was greedy to hear Prodicus—for I think the man is all-wise and divine—but because of the depth of his voice, there was a kind of droning murmur in the room which made what was said indistinct.

And we'd just come in when Alcibiades entered close behind us—the fair Alcibiades, as you say and I believe—along with Critias, son of Callaeschrus. So we went in, and after whiling away a little time looking at the scene, we went up to Protagoras, and I said, Protagoras, Hippocrates here and I have come to you.

b Do you wish to discuss with me alone, he said, or in the company of others?

It makes no difference to us, I said. You can decide for yourself when you hear why we've come.

Very well then, he said. Why did you come?

Can Virtue Be Taught? (316b–320c)

Hippocrates here is my fellow countryman, son of Apollodorus, of a great and happy house, and he himself seems a match for

6. Cf. *Hippias Minor* 367e.

7. *Odyssey* XI 582. Cf. *Cratylus* 395e. The comparison of Prodicus to Tantalus has been taken to imply physical suffering, but it may also have suggested greed, thirst and hunger. It is at the very least a double-edged compliment.

c anyone his age in natural ability. I think he wants to become distinguished in his city and supposes the best way to do it is to become your pupil; at this point, then, please consider whether you think you should discuss this matter with us privately or with others present.

Your thoughtfulness in my behalf is proper, Socrates. For when a man goes as a stranger to great cities, and in them persuades the best of the young men to leave their other associations, relatives and acquaintances old and young, and associate with him, so that they will be as good as possible through their association with himself, he must beware. For no small jealousy arises over it, and other ill will, and plots. I claim that the sophistic art is ancient, but those who had a hand in it among the ancients were afraid of the opprobrium attaching to it, and disguised and concealed themselves—some as poets, like Homer and Hesiod and Simonides, others again as prophets and soothsayers, like Orpheus and Musaeus and their followers. Some even as trainers, I've observed, like Iccus of Tarentum and Herodicus of Selymbria, formerly of Megara, still living and a sophist inferior to none. Music was the disguise of your own Agathocles, a great sophist, and of Pythocles of Ceos and many others. All of them, as I say, used these arts as a screen for fear of jealousy. But I don't agree with any of them in this: I believe they didn't accomplish what they wished. The reason for these disguises didn't escape the notice of people powerful in the affairs of their cities, even though the Many of course are aware of almost nothing but merely sing the praises of anything the others announce. Well, running away without being able to run away except to be discovered is great folly even in the attempt, and necessarily brings men much greater ill will, for people believe a man like that is unscrupulous in other things too. No, I've traveled quite the opposite road: I agree that I'm a sophist and that I educate men, and I think this agreement a better precaution than denial. I've taken other precautions in this too, so that, please god, I suffer nothing terrible from agreeing I'm a sophist. And yet I am now many years in the art; in fact, the sum is so great that in respect to age, there's not one of you whose father I might not be. So it's much more pleasant for me, if you're willing, to give an account of all this in front of those within.

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And I—for I suspected he wanted to make a display in front of Prodicus and Hippias and show off because we'd come as his

d admirers—I said, Why not then call Prodicus and Hippias and those with them, so they can hear us?

Why, of course, said Protagoras.

Then do you want us to arrange a seated session, said Callias, so that you can sit and talk?

It seemed we should do so. We were all delighted at the prospect of hearing wise men, and we picked up the benches and
e couches ourselves and arranged them beside Hippias—for some benches were already there—and in the meantime, Callias and Alcibiades came bringing Prodicus, risen from his bed, and the people with Prodicus too.

When we all were seated, Protagoras said, Now that these people are also here, Socrates, you might say something about the subject you mentioned to me a moment ago in the young man's behalf.

318a And I said, I'll begin the same way I did just now, Protagoras, about why I've come. Hippocrates here desires your tutelage; he says he'd like to learn what will result for him if he studies with you. That's the extent of our tale.

Young man, said Protagoras in reply, this is what you'll get if you study with me. On the day you come to me, you'll return home better, and the next day the same; and each day you'll always improve.

b I heard this and said, Protagoras, this isn't at all surprising but probable, since even at your age and wise as you are, you'd improve, if somebody taught you what you didn't know. But take a different case. Suppose Hippocrates here suddenly changed his desire and wanted to be a pupil of this young fellow who's just recently come to town, Zeuxippus of Heraclea. And suppose he went to him as he's now come to you, and heard exactly the same things you've said, how each day he's with him he'll get better and
c improve. Suppose he asked him, In what do you claim I'll be better? How will I improve? Zeuxippus would tell him, In painting. Or suppose he met Orthagoras the Theban and heard him say the same things you do, and asked him in what, through his association with him, he'd daily become better. He'd reply, In flute
d playing. In just the same way, tell the young man, and me as I question you in his behalf: Suppose Hippocrates here associates with Protagoras and departs a better man on the same day he becomes his pupil and so on each subsequent day. How will he improve, Protagoras, and in what?

Protagoras, on hearing this from me, replied, You ask an excellent question, Socrates, and I delight in answering questions excellently asked. For if he comes to me, Hippocrates will not experience what those who associate with some other sophists do. For they maltreat the young who have fled the arts: they lead them back against their will and throw them into the arts, teaching them
e calculation and astronomy and geometry and music—and at this he glanced at Hippias—but if he comes to me, he won't learn anything except what he came for. The subject of study is good judgment about his own affairs and how he may best order his own house, and about the affairs of the city and how he may be most powerful in those affairs both in action and speech.

319a Do I follow you? I said. I think you speak of the political art and undertake to make men good citizens.

That's exactly my promise, Socrates, he said.

What a fine product of art you possess then, I said—if indeed you possess it; for I won't say anything to you except what I think. I didn't suppose this could be taught, Protagoras, though if you say
b so, I can hardly doubt it. Still, it's right for me to say why I believe it can't be taught or provided by men for men. Like other Greeks, I claim the Athenians are wise. Well, I observe that when we gather in the Assembly and the city needs to deal with something having to do with building, builders are summoned to advise, and shipfit-
c ters to advise about shipbuilding, and so in everything else they believe can be learned and taught; if somebody else undertakes to advise them whom they don't think is a craftsman, even if he's quite handsome and rich and well born, they don't at all accept it, but jeer and make a disturbance until the person undertaking to speak is shouted down and withdraws, or the officers remove or expel him by order of the magistrates. That's what they do about matters they think involve art. But when something about the
d administration of the city must be taken under advisement, a carpenter or smith, a shoemaker, merchant or shipowner, rich or poor, well born or common, may equally rise to advise them about it, and no one criticizes him, as before, for never having studied anywhere or for not having a teacher but still undertaking to offer advice; for it's clear they don't believe it can be taught. Why, it's so
e not only of the common constitution of the city but also in private affairs: the wisest and best of our politicians are unable to hand on this virtue they possess to others. Look at Pericles, the father of these young men here; he educated them excellently and well in

320a subjects which can be got from teachers, but in those in which he is himself wise he neither taught them himself nor handed them over to anyone else; no, they were allowed to wander at large and graze like untended cattle, on the chance they might somehow happen on virtue spontaneously. If you wish, take Cleinias, the younger brother of Alcibiades here; this same gentleman, Pericles, acting as his guardian and afraid lest he be corrupted by Alcibiades, removed him and placed him in Ariphron's house to b be educated; and before six months passed, Ariphron gave him back, because he didn't know what to do with him. And I can mention a host of others who were themselves good but never made anyone else, of their own or another's, better. So when I look to this, Protagoras, I doubt that virtue can be taught. But when I hear you say it can, I must defer; I think you're saying something important, due to my belief that you've had wide experience and learned many things and discovered some yourself. If you can exhibit to us more clearly that virtue can be taught, then, please don't at all begrudge us, but do so.

c Why Socrates, he said, I'll not begrudge you. Shall I exhibit to you as older to younger by telling a story, or by going through an argument?

Well, many of those sitting by him replied that he should proceed in whichever way he wished.

Then I think it's more graceful to tell you a story, he said.

The Speech of Protagoras (320c–328d)

The Myth of Prometheus and Zeus (320c–324c)

Once upon a time, there were gods but no mortal kinds. When the d time destined for birth came, the gods shaped them within the earth from earth mixed with fire and everything compounded of fire and earth. And when they were about to lead them upward to the light, the gods ordered Prometheus and Epimetheus to arrange and distribute to each such powers as were proper. Epimetheus himself asked Prometheus to let him to perform the distribution: I'll distribute, he said, and you'll oversee. Thus persuading him, he distributed.

In distributing, he attached strength to some without speed, e but the weaker he adorned with speed. Some he armed, others he left unarmed but gave another nature and devised power of pre-

servation for them. Some he surrounded with smallness, and distributed winged escape or subterranean dwelling places; others he increased in size and by this very thing preserved them. And he distributed the rest of the powers this way, balancing them equally.

321a These things he devised, taking care lest any kind should be destroyed. When he supplied them with means of escape from mutual destruction, he also devised protection against the seasons sent from Zeus, clothing them in thick hair and tough hides sufficient to ward off winter cold but able also to resist summer heat, and so that each would have the same for his very own personal and self-grown mattress when he went to bed; and some he shod b with hooves, some with tough and bloodless hides. Next he provided different foods for different kinds, grasses from earth for some, fruits from trees for others, for others roots; but to some he gave as food the flesh of other animals, and these he made less prolific, but their prey he made very prolific, providing preservation for their race.

Well, because Epimetheus was not very wise, he heedlessly c lavished powers on the brute beats, but the human race was still left unprovided by him, and he was at a loss what to do. He was in perplexity when Prometheus came to oversee the distribution, and saw that while the other animals were well provided in everything, man was naked and unshod and unbedded and unarmed.

And the destined day was now at hand in which man also must go forth from earth into the light. So Prometheus, in perplexity about what he might discover for the preservation of man, stole d form Hephaestus and Athena wisdom in the arts, along with fire—for without fire there was no means for anyone to possess or use art itself—and so gave them to man. In this way man got wisdom for the needs of life, but he did not have the political art, for that was in the keeping of Zeus. Prometheus was no longer permitted to enter the Acropolis which is the dwelling place of e Zeus—and in addition the guards of Zeus were terrible—but he secretly entered the building shared by Athena and Hephaestus, in which the two liked to practice their arts, and stole the fiery art of Hephaestus and the other art belonging to Athena[8] and gave

8. The reference is unclear, the result of sophistical vagueness. Athena was a war goddess, expert in battle, female but fully armed. She was also goddess of spinning and weaving, pottery, and of arts in general. In Athens the Chalceia, the Festival of Smiths, was held in her honor, so she plainly overlapped Hephaestus in function. As patroness of multiple arts, she was a personification of wisdom generally.

them to man; from this man got easy provision for the needs of life. But afterward Prometheus, it is told, thanks to Epimetheus, was put on trial for theft.

322a Since man had a share of divine apportionment, he was, first, the only animal that acknowledged gods because of his kinship to the god,[9] and he undertook to set up altars and images of gods; next he quickly invented speech and names by his art, and discovered houses and clothes and shoes and beds, and food from the earth. But men, thus provided, dwelt in the beginning scattered
b and apart, and there were no cities; so they were destroyed by wild beats because they were everywhere weaker. The craftsman's art was sufficient to help them relative to food, but lacking relative to war with wild beasts: for they did not yet have the art of politics, of which the art of war is a part.

So they sought to collect themselves together and preserve themselves by founding cities. Well, when they were collected together they did injustice to each other because they did not have the art of politics, so they were scattered again and destroyed.
c Zeus, then, fearing that our race would be completely destroyed, sent Hermes to bring reverence and right to men, so that there might be good order for cities and binding ties of friendship. Well, Hermes asked Zeus in what manner he should give right and reverence to men: Do I distribute them as the arts have been distributed? They've been distributed thus: one man with medical art suffices for many laymen, and so with the other craftsmen. Am I to put right and reverence among men in this way too, or distrib-
d ute to all? And Zeus said, To all. Let all have a share. For there would be no cities if only a few, as with other arts, partook of these. Yes, and put it as my law that he who is incapable of partaking of reverence and right is to die as a civic disease.

Thus then, Socrates, and for these reasons, when there is speech about virtue in the art of building or any other art, Athenians as well as others think they should consult only a few, and if
e someone besides those few offers advice, they do not allow it, as you say—reasonably, as I claim. But when they come to consult about political virtue, which must all come through justice and

9. Protagoras claims that men have kinship to the gods. The basis of that kinship has just been explained: it is not that men are made in the image of God, but that they possess fire and the arts. Note that Protagoras passes from singular to plural, from god to gods, without any clear sense of transition: if "the god" were Athena, we should expect the feminine article. This is characteristic of Greek usage, and common in Plato.

temperance, they quite reasonably accept advice from all men,
323a because all must have a share of this virtue lest there be no city.
That, Socrates, is the cause of this.

But so that you may not think yourself misled, accept this further proof that all men really believe that every man partakes
b of justice and the rest of political virtue. For in the other virtues, as you say, if someone claims to be a good flute player or good at any other art when he's not, people either scoff or become angry, and his relatives will come and admonish him as if he were mad. But in justice and the rest of political virtue, even if they know that someone is unjust, yet still, if he himself tells the truth about himself in front of many people, honesty which they elsewhere count as temperance they here count as madness; they say that everyone ought to claim to be just whether they are or not, or that anyone who doesn't pretend to justice is mad. Because they think everyone without exception must necessarily partake of it somehow or other, or not exist among men.

c I claim then that they reasonably accept advice from all men about this virtue in the belief that all share it.

That they don't believe it exists by nature or arises spontaneously, but can be taught and comes to be present, in those in whom it comes to be present, by study, this I shall try to demonstrate for you with this. For no one is angry over such evils as men believe each other to possess by nature or by chance, or admon-
d ishes or instructs or punishes those who have them in order that they not be that way, but they pity them. Who, for example, is so irrational as to undertake to do any of this to those who are ugly or small or weak? Because, I suppose, they know that things beautiful and the opposite come to people by nature and by chance. But
e as to the good things they think people get from study and practice and teaching, if someone possesses not them but the evils opposite to them, anger rises against them, and punishments and admonishment.

One among these evils is injustice and impiety and, in sum,
324a everything completely opposite to political virtue. But where all are angry at all and admonish them, it is clearly because possession derives from study and learning. For if you will consider punishment, Socrates, and what it effects on those who do wrong, it will teach you that men believe virtue can be produced. No one punishes those who do wrong attending to and because of the fact that they did wrong, unless he exacts irrational vengeance like a wild

b beast. Whoever undertakes to punish in accord with reason does not exact requital for the crime which has been committed—what has been done cannot be undone—but for the future, in order that neither the fellow himself nor anyone else who sees him being punished shall again do wrong. And having such an intention as
c this, he conceives virtue to be taught; at any rate he punishes for the sake of deterrence. Now, everyone holds this opinion who exacts requital in public and private. But other people, and not least the Athenians, your fellow citizens, exact requital and punish those they think do wrong; so by this account, Athenians too are of the belief that virtue can be produced and taught.

In this way it is sufficiently demonstrated to you, Socrates, at least as it appears to me, that your fellow citizens reasonably accept the advice of smiths and cobblers in political matters, and that they believe virtue can be produced and taught.

Argument: Everyone Teaches Virtue (324d–328c)

d There remains still the perplexity which perplexes you about good men: Why do good men teach their own sons other things which have teachers and make them wise, but make them no better than anyone else in the virtue in which their own goodness consists? About this, then, Socrates, I'll no longer offer you a story but an argument. Consider the following:

Is there or is there not some one thing of which all citizens
e must necessarily have a shore if there is to be a city? For the perplexity which perplexes you is resolved here or nowhere. If there is, and if this one thing is not the art of the builder or smith
325a or potter, but justice and temperance and the holy, and in sum one thing by itself I call virtue in a man—if it is of this that all must partake, and with this that every man must thus act if he wishes to learn or do anything else, and not without it; if we must teach or punish him who does not partake of it, man, woman and child, until by being punished he becomes better, if we must cast out of the city or put to death as incurable whoever does not comply after
b being punished and taught—if this is so, then given that it is so, if good men teach their sons other things but not this, consider how strange good men become. For that they believe that it can be taught in public and private, we proved. But since it can be taught and cultivated, do they perhaps then teach their sons other things for which the penalty is not death if they are ignorant, but where the penalty for their children, if they do not learn and are unculti-

c vated in respect of virtue, is death and exile—and in addition to death, confiscation of property and, in short, the total overturn of their houses—these things, then, they do not teach nor care for with all care? So we are to suppose, Socrates.

They teach and admonish them, beginning in early childhood, for as long as they live. As soon as a child understands what is being said, nurse and mother and tutor and the father himself
d compete to make him as good as possible, teaching and showing in every word and deed that this is just, that unjust, this beautiful, that ugly, this holy, that unholy, do this, don't do that. And if he willingly obeys—good. But if not, they correct and straighten him out like a warped piece of wood, with threats and blows. After that,
e they send him to teachers charged to care much more about the deportment of the children than their letters and lyre. Their teachers do care, and when they've learned their letters and are beginning to understand what is written as before they under-
326a stood the spoken word, they set before them at their benches the poems of good poets to read and make them learn them by heart; these contain many admonitions and narratives and songs praising good men of old, in order that the child may zealously imitate and desire to become like them. The lyre teachers, again, are similarly concerned for temperance, and that the young should
b do no ill; in addition to learning to play the lyre, they also teach them poems of other good lyric poets, accompanying the poems on the lyre, and compel the rhythms and modes to dwell in the souls of the children so that they may be more gentle, and by becoming better attuned and more rhythmical may be useful in speech and action; for the whole life of man needs rhythm and attunement. Still again they send them to the trainer, so that by having better bodies they may minister to their excellence of mind, and not be compelled to cowardice in warfare and other
c actions through the badness of their bodies. Those who are especially powerful do this; the richest are especially powerful; and their sons begin school earliest and are released latest. But when they're released from teachers, the city also compels them to learn its laws and live by them as by a pattern or example, in order that they may not act at random on their own. It is as when writing
d masters trace the outline of letters with a stylus for children not yet skilled at writing, and so give them the copybook and compel them to write following the lines; in the same way the city traces the outline of its laws, discoveries of good and ancient lawgivers,

and compels them to rule and be ruled according to them. Whoever steps beyond them she punishes, and a name for this punish-
e ment among you and in many other places is correction, because the just penalty corrects.

Since, then, there is so much concern about virtue in public and private, are you surprised and perplexed, Socrates, if virtue can be taught? You should not be surprised, but much rather if it were not taught.

Why then are many worthless sons born to good fathers? Learn this too. For it is hardly surprising, if indeed I told the truth
327a in what I said before, namely, that no one must be unpracticed in this thing, virtue, if there is to be a city. For if what I say is so—and it is most certainly so—then consider any other pursuit or study you choose. Suppose it were impossible for a city to exist unless we were all flute players, as far as each of us was able; and further suppose that everyone taught everyone in public and private, and reproved those who did not play well and did not begrudge him,
b as at present no one is grudging in matters of justice and lawfulness, or conceals it like the devices of other arts. For I suppose the justice and virtue of each is profitable to the others: that's why all speak eagerly to all and teach what things are just and lawful. Well, suppose we were that eager and ungrudging in teaching each other flute playing. Do you think, Socrates, he said, that the sons of good flute players would become good flute players any the more than the sons of worthless ones? I think not. Rather, the
c son who happened to be born with most natural ability for the flute would grow up to be distinguished, the son who lacked natural ability would be left in the shade; often the son of a good flute player would turn out worthless, and often the son of a worthless flute player good, yet all would then at any rate[10] be adequate flute players compared to laymen who know nothing of fluting.

In the same way now, you should suppose that whoever ap-
d pears to you most unjust, among those raised among laws and men, is himself just and indeed a very artist at the thing compared to men who have neither education nor courts nor laws nor any necessity compelling them constantly to be concerned for virtue;

10. Reading γοῦν with BTW. Modern editors do not like the clash with οὖ in the same line; it is here attested that Protagoras did, and surely not impossible: compare for example the jingle in τις ὅστις in 328a 8.

on the contrary, they'd be wild beasts of the sort the poet Pherecrates produced last year at the Lenaea.[11] No doubt if you found yourself among such men as the misanthropes in his chorus, you'd be delighted to meet even Eurybates and Phrynondas,[12] and
e you'd cry out in longing for the wickedness of people here. But as it is, Socrates, you're spoiled. Because all teach virtue so far as each
328a is able, it appears to you that no one does. Why, it's as if you were to ask who teaches Greek; no one person would appear, nor would any appear, I think, if you were to inquire who teaches the sons of our artisans the same art they've learned from their father, insofar as the father was competent and his friends were fellow craftsmen. As to who else would teach them, Socrates, I doubt it would be easy to show a teacher for them, but easy for those completely without experience; so too for virtue and everything else.

But even if someone surpasses us by only a little in promoting
b virtue, it is to be welcomed. Of whom indeed I think I am one: that I surpass the rest of mankind in assisting a person to become noble and good, and that I'm worthy of the fee I charge and still more, as seems true even to the pupil himself. That's why I've devised the following manner of setting my fee: when someone learns from
c me, he may if he wishes pay what I charge; but if not, he can go to a temple, swear on oath how much he claims my instruction is worth, and deposit that amount.

Conclusion (328c–d)

There, Socrates, he said. I've told you in both story and argument that virtue can be taught and Athenians believe so, and that it is not at all surprising that worthless sons are born of good fathers and good sons of worthless fathers, since even the sons of Polycleitus, who are the same age as Paralus and Xanthippus here, are nothing compared to their father, and other sons of other crafts-
d men too. But they don't yet deserve this charge; there's still hope for them, because they're young.

11. A winter festival held in January/February of the Athenian luni-solar year. "Last year," given the dramatic date of the *Protagoras,* would be perhaps 435/4. So if this passage refers to Pherecrates' play *The Savages,* which was produced in 421/20, it is a pointless anachronism. But it need not so refer: Pherecrates won his first dramatic competition in 438 and may well have returned to such an obvious theme several times. Besides, the title of the play here mentioned appears to have been *The Misanthropes.* Plato uses anachronism, but generally with a dramatic purpose in view.

12. Two real-life scoundrels.

The Unity of Virtue (328d–334d)

After such and so great a display, Protagoras ceased speaking. Spellbound, I for some time still kept looking at him, all eagerness to hear, as if he would go on; but when at last I realized he had really stopped, I somehow with difficulty collected myself, as it were, and glanced toward Hippocrates and said: Son of Apollodorus, how grateful I am to you for urging me to come here, for
e I count it important to have heard what I've heard from Protagoras. I formerly believed it is by no human care that good men become good; but now I'm persuaded. Except for a certain small
329a difficulty, which it's clear Protagoras will easily explain, since he's already explained so many. Actually, if one went to any of the orators about these same matters, one might perhaps hear just such speeches as this from Pericles or any other able speaker. But if they're asked a question, they're like books which can neither answer nor put questions themselves; on the contrary, if someone asks some little question about what's been said, it's like a gong that continues—unless one takes hold of it—to sound long after it's struck; in the same way these orators, asked a short question,
b stretch out a lengthy speech. Protagoras here is capable of giving long and beautiful speeches, as he's shown, but he's also capable of answering briefly when questioned, and after putting a question, to wait and accept the answer—a thing few are prepared to do.

Now then, Protagoras, I'd lack little of having everything if you'd just answer me this. You say that virtue can be taught,[13] and if indeed I could be persuaded of it by any other man, I'd be
c persuaded by you. But please satisfy my soul about something which surprised me in what you said. For you said that Zeus sent justice and reverence to men, and again in several places in your speech that justice and temperance and holiness and all that are in sum one thing, namely, virtue.[14] Give me then a precise account of just this: is virtue one single thing, but justice and temperance and holiness parts of it, or are these things I just now mentioned all names for one and the same thing? That's what I still want to know.

d Why, that's easy, Socrates, he said. Virtue is one, and what you ask about are parts of it.

13. διδακτόν. The first verbal adjective denotes possibility, *teachable*, as the second verbal adjective denotes necessity; but the first verbal adjective also sometimes has the force of a perfect passive participle, *taught*.

14. See 324e–325a, 323a, e.

Are they parts like the parts of the face, I said, mouth and nose and eyes and ears, or like the parts of gold, which don't differ at all one from another and from the whole except in largeness and smallness?

e The former, it appears to me, Socrates: as the parts of the face are to the whole face.

Then when people come to partake of these parts of virtue, I said, do some partake of one, others of another, or is it necessary if someone receives one to have all?

Not at all, he said, since many are courageous but unjust, and just again, but not wise.

330a These then are also parts of virtue, I said, namely, wisdom and courage?

Most certainly so, he said. And the most important among them, surely, is wisdom.

Each of them, I said, is different from any other?

Yes.

Does each of them also have its own peculiar power? As with the parts of the face, the eye is not such as the ears, nor is its power the same, nor is one such as any of the others in respect to either power or anything else. Is it then so also that one part of virtue is

b not such as another, either in itself or in its power? Or isn't it clearly so, if indeed it's like the example?

Why, it's so, Socrates, he said.

And I said, So no other part of virtue is such as knowledge, nor such as justice, nor such as courage, nor such as temperance, nor such as holiness?

No, he said.

Come then, I said, let's jointly inquire what sort each of them is. First this: Is justice a kind of thing, or not a thing at all? For it seems to me it is. Does it to you?

c And to me, he said.

Well then, suppose someone should ask you and me, "Protagoras and Socrates, will you two please tell me, is this thing which you just now named, justice, itself a just thing or an unjust thing?" I'd answer him that it's a just thing. How would you vote? The same as me, or different?

The same, he said.

So justice is of such sort as to be a just thing, I'd answer the questioner. And you would too?

d Yes, he said.

Suppose then he next asked us, "Then you also say that holiness is something?" We'd agree, I suppose.

Yes, said he.

"Then you say this too is a kind of thing?" We'd agree, wouldn't we?

He also concurred in this.

"Do you say this thing itself is by nature of such sort as to be an unholy thing, or of such sort as to be a holy thing?" I'd be annoyed at the question, I said, and I'd reply, Don't blaspheme, fellow! It could scarcely be that anything else would be holy, if holiness itself is not to be a holy thing. What about you? Wouldn't you reply the same way?

e Of course, he said.

Then suppose next he were to ask us: "Then what were you saying a moment ago? Didn't I hear you correctly? I thought you said that the parts of virtue are so related to each other that one of them is not such as any other." I'd myself reply, You heard the rest correctly, but in thinking I said this, you misheard. Protagoras
331a here said it in answer to my question. Suppose then he said, "Is he telling the truth, Protagoras? Do you say one part of virtue is not such as any of the others? Is that your account?" What would you answer him?

I must necessarily agree, Socrates, he said.

Then what answer shall we give him, Protagoras, once we agree to this, if he should go on to ask us, "So holiness is not such as to be a just thing, nor justice such as to be a holy thing, but such as
b not to be a holy thing? And holiness such as not to be a just thing, but perhaps then an unjust thing, what is unholy?"[15] What shall we answer him? For my part, I'd say that justice is a holy thing and holiness a just thing, and if you allow me, I'd give the same answer for you: that more probably justice is either the same as holiness or a thing most like it, but it is beyond question that justice is such as holiness and holiness such as justice. But see if you forbid this answer, or whether you accept it too.

I don't think it's quite so simple, Socrates, he said, as to agree
c that justice is a holy thing and holiness a just thing; I think there's some difference in it. But what difference does it make? he said. If you wish, let justice be a holy thing and holiness a just thing for us.

15. Unjust, or not just; unholy, or not holy. ἄρα, translated "perhaps then," as weakly inferential. For the inference, cf. *Charmides* 161a: "Temperance is good, since it makes those things to which it is present good, but not bad."

No, I said, it's not "if you wish" and "if you think so" I need to examine, but you and me: I say "you and me," because I suppose the account would thus best be examined if one subtracted the "if" from it.

d But of course, he said, justice does have a certain resemblance to holiness; in fact, everything in some way or other resembles everything else. For white in a way resembles black, and hard resembles soft, and other things which seem most opposite to each other. And the parts of the face, which we just claimed to have a different power, and one not such as any other, in some way or e other resemble each other, and one is such as the other; so in this way you could even prove, if you wished, that they're all like each other. But it's not right to call things alike which have only some likeness, even if the likeness is very small, nor things unlike which have only some unlikeness.

I was surprised, and said to him, Then you think the just and the holy are so related that they have only some small likeness to each other?

332a Not quite that, he said, but on the other hand not as you seem to think either.

Very well, I said, since you seem annoyed with this, let's dismiss it and consider the other thing you were saying. There is something you call folly?

He assented.

Is not wisdom the utter opposite of this thing?

I think so, he said.

When people act rightly and beneficially, do you think they're then temperate in so acting or the opposite?

Temperate, he said.

Now, they are temperate by temperance?[16]

b Necessarily.

Now, those who do not act rightly act foolishly, and they are not temperate in so acting?

I concur, he said.

So acting foolishly is opposed to acting temperately?

He assented.

Now, what is done foolishly is done by folly, but what is done temperately by temperance?

16. The dative is instrumental, to be glossed by ὑπό and the genitive of agent (332c 1–2), as well as μετά and the genitive of accompaniment which implies causation.

He agreed.

Now, if something is done by strength, it is done strongly, and if by weakness, weakly?

He thought so.

And if with quickness, quickly, and if with slowness, slowly?

He assented.

c And if anything then is done in the same way, it is done by the same thing, and if in the opposite way by the opposite?

He concurred.

Come then, I said, is there something beautiful?

He conceded it.

Is there anything opposite to it except the ugly?

There is not.

Then is there something good?

There is.

Is there anything opposite to it except the bad?

There is not.

Then is there something high in pitch?

He assented.

Is there anything opposite to it except the low?

He said not.

Now, there is only one opposite, I said, for each one of the opposites, and not many?

He concurred.

d Come then, I said, let's reckon up what we've agreed. We've agreed that for one thing there is only one opposite, and not many?

We have.

And that what is oppositely done is done by opposites?

He assented.

But we've agreed that what's done foolishly is done oppositely to what's done temperately?

He assented.

but what's done temperately is done by temperance, and what's done foolishly by folly?

e He conceded it.

Then since done oppositely, it would be done by an opposite?

Yes.

The one is done by temperance, the other by folly?

Yes.

Oppositely?

Of course.

Then done by opposite things?

Yes.

So folly is opposite to temperance.

It appears so.

Do you recall then that we earlier agreed that folly is opposite to wisdom?

He concurred.

But for one opposite there is only one opposite?

333a I agree.

Then which account should we let go, Protagoras? That one thing has only one opposite, or the account in which it was said that wisdom is different from temperance but each of the two is part of virtue, and that in addition to being different they're also unlike both in themselves and in their powers, as with the parts of the face? Which then should we let go? For these accounts, taken together, are not very musical:[17] they are neither in concord nor in attunement with each other. How indeed could they accord, b since for one thing there is necessarily only one opposite and no more, but wisdom appears opposite to folly, which is one, and temperance does too? Isn't that so, Protagoras? I said. Or is it otherwise?

He agreed, much against his will.

Then temperance and wisdom would be one? But on the other hand, it appeared to us before that justice and holiness are pretty nearly the same thing. Come then, Protagoras, I said, let's not falter but complete the remainder of the inquiry. Does a person doing injustice seem to you temperate in respect to what he unjustly does?[18]

c I'd be ashamed to agree to this, Socrates, though the majority of men at least say so.

Then shall I direct the argument to them, I said, or to you?

If you will, he said, please examine the account of the Many first.

Why it makes no difference to me, if only you answer, whether then you think it true or not. For I primarily examine the argument, though it perhaps also results that both I as the questioner and the respondent as well are examined.

17. Cf. 326b.
18. Construed following Adam and Adam, Cf. 333d 6.

d Well, at first Protagoras was mock-modest with us—he alleged the argument was hard to deal with—but finally, he agreed to answer.

Come then, I said, answer me from the beginning: Do you think some people are temperate in doing injustice?

Let it be so, he said.

But you say that to be temperate is to be reasonable?

He assented.

But to be reasonable is to be well advised in respect to what they unjustly do?

Let it be so, he said.

If they fare well by doing injustice, I said, or if they fare badly?

If they fare well.

Now, you say some things are good?

I do.

Now, I said, those things are good which are beneficial to men?

e Yes, by Zeus, he said, and even if they're not beneficial to men, I call them good.

I thought Protagoras at this point was ruffled and contentious and prepared to struggle against answering. So when I saw he was that way, I took care to question gently.

334a Do you mean, Protagoras, said I, what is not beneficial to any man, or what is not beneficial to anything at all? Do you call even such things as that good?

Not at all, he said. But I know many things which are useless to men—food and drink and drugs and countless others—but some are beneficial; and some things are neither the one nor the other to men, but to horses; some only to cattle, others to dogs; yes, and some to none of these, but to trees; and some good for the roots of the tree but bad for the branches, as for example dung is good

b when thrown around the roots of all plants, but if you throw it on shoots and young branches it destroys everything. Then again, olive oil is quite bad for all plants and most inimical to the hair of other animals except man, but serviceable to the hair of man and the rest of the body. So various a thing is the good, and varied in kind, that in this case it is good for the man on the outside of his

c body, but the same thing is extremely bad on the inside, and for this reason, all doctors forbid sick people to use olive oil in what they're going to eat, except in the smallest possible amount, just enough to quell disgust at the smell in their nostrils arising from food and drink.

Interlude: Questions and Speeches (334c–338e)

Well, when he said this, the company loudly applauded how well he spoke, and I said: I'm a forgetful sort of fellow, Protagoras, and if someone speaks at length, I forget what the discussion was
d about. Just as if I were hard of hearing, you'd suppose you had to speak louder to me than to others if you intended to carry on a discussion with me, so now, since you've met someone forgetful, you must chop up your answers for me and make them briefer if I'm to follow you.

How then do you bid me answer briefly? Am I to answer you more briefly than is required? he said.

Not at all, said I.

The length required? he said.

e Yes, said I.

Then are my answers to be as long as I think required, or as you do?

I've heard, at any rate, said I, that you're able to speak about the same things yourself and teach others, if you wish, both at such
335a length that the speech leaves nothing out, and again, so briefly that no one could be briefer.[19] Now, if you intend to discuss with me, please use the other way toward me, the short-speech style.

Socrates, he said, I've at this point entered on verbal contests with many a man, and if I did what you bid and discussed as my opponent bid me discuss, I'd have appeared no better than anybody else, nor would the name of Protagoras have become famous among the Greeks.

And I—for I realized he was dissatisfied with himself for his
b previous answers and wouldn't willingly answer in discussion—I believed it was no longer my job to be present at the meeting.

Why really, Protagoras, I said, I'm not at all desirous of continuing our meeting against your better judgment, but when you're willing to discuss so that I'm able to follow, I'll discuss with you then. For you, as is said of you and indeed as you claim yourself, are able to conduct meetings in either long-speech style or short-
c speech style—for you're wise—but I'm not capable of these long ones, though I might wish I were. Surely it's for you who are capable of both to give way to us, so the meeting may go on. But as it is, since you refuse, I have other business and can't stay while you

19. Cf. *Gorgias* 449c, 461d–462b; *Phaedrus* 267b.

stretch out long speeches—I must go somewhere—I'll go. Though it would perhaps not be unpleasant to have heard you.

At that I rose to leave. And as I stood up, Callias took my hand
d in his right hand and took hold of this cloak here with his left, and said, We won't let you go, Socrates, for if you leave, our discussion won't be the same. So I beg you to stay with us, because there's nothing I'd more gladly hear than a discussion between you and Protagoras. Please oblige us all.

And I said—I'd already risen to go—I always admire your love
e of wisdom, son of Hipponicus, and certainly I praise and value it now, so I'd wish to gratify you if you requested something I could do. But as it is, it's as if you asked me to keep up with Crison, the runner of Himera, in his prime, or to compete and keep up with
336a some long distance or cross-country runner; I'd tell you I wish far more than you that I could keep pace with them, but of course I can't, so if you want to see Crison and me running in the same place, you must ask him to moderate his pace, because I can't run fast and he can run slowly. If then you want to hear me and Protagoras, you must ask him also to answer me now as he did at
b first, with short replies to the exact questions asked. Otherwise, what will be the character of the discussion? I thought meeting for mutual discussion and public speaking were separate things.

But Socrates, he said—Don't you see?—Protagoras seems justified in asking to be allowed to discuss as he wishes, and you also as you wish.

Then Alcibiades broke in. Wrong, Callias, he said. Socrates here agrees that he lacks the long-speech style and yields to Pro-
c tagoras, but I'd be surprised if he yields to any man in being able to discuss, and in knowing how to render and receive an account. Now, if Protagoras in fact agrees he's inferior to Socrates in discussion, it's enough for Socrates; but if he disputes it, let him discuss by asking and answering questions, without stretching out a long speech on each question, evading the arguments and refusing to
d render an account, but drawing things out at length until most of his hearers forget what the question was—though I promise Socrates at least won't forget, even if he jokes and says he's forgetful. So I think what Socrates says is more fair; after all, each of us must declare his own judgment.

After Alcibiades, I think, Critias spoke: Prodicus and Hippias, Callias seems to me to be very much in favor of Protagoras, and
e Alcibiades is always ambitious for whichever side he's cheering on.

But it's not for us to take sides with either Socrates or Protagoras, but to ask them jointly not to break up our meeting in the middle of things.

337a When he said this, Prodicus replied, I think you're right, Critias. For those present at discussions such as this should give joint but not equal ear to both of two discussants. For it's not the same: one should hear both jointly, not assigning equal importance to each of the two, but instead more to the wiser, less to the unwise. For my part, Protagoras and Socrates, I think you should accede, and disagree with each other over arguments but not dispute—for friends disagree with friends through good will, but b those who quarrel and are enemies dispute with each other—and in this way the meeting would be best for us. For you who speak in this way would be especially esteemed, not praised, among us who hear—for esteem is present in the souls of those who hear without deception, but praise often in the speech of those who speak falsely contrary their opinion. Again, we who hear would in this way be especially gladdened, not pleased—for gladness is learn- c ing something and having a share of wisdom in the mind by itself, but being pleased is eating something or otherwise experiencing pleasure in the body by itself.

Well, when Prodicus said this, quite a few of the company approved. After Prodicus, next spoke Hippias the wise: Gentlemen here present, he said, I believe you are all kinsmen and d relatives and fellow citizens by nature, not by law; for by nature like is akin to like, but law is a tyrant of mankind and forces many things contrary to nature. Now, it would be shameful in us to know the nature of things and yet, though the wisest of Greeks, and now met for that very reason here at the very hearth of the wisdom of e Greece, and in this, the greatest and most magnificent house of this city—to yet show ourselves unworthy of this dignity, but to quarrel among ourselves like the most inferior of men. So I request and advise you, Protagoras and Socrates, to come to terms in 338a the middle as though brought together by us as arbitrators. You, Socrates, are not to seek this precise form of discussion with too much brevity, if it does not please Protagoras; you must give way and slacken the reins of your arguments so that they may appear more imposing and elegant to us. Nor again is Protagoras to stretch out all sail and run before the wind, fleeing into the ocean of arguments beyond sight of land. Both are to steer a middle course. So do this, then, and be persuaded by me to choose an

umpire and overseer and president who will watch the measure of length of the speeches of you both.

b This was agreeable to the company and everyone applauded, and Callias refused to let me go, and they begged me to choose an overseer. So I said, It would be shameful to choose a judge of the speeches. For either the person chosen will be inferior to us, and it would not be right for the worse to oversee the better; or he will be c like us, and also act like us, so that choosing him will be superfluous. Perhaps then you'll choose someone better than us? In truth, I think it's impossible for you to choose anyone wiser than Protagoras here, and if you choose no better but you claim it is, it's an insult, as though you were choosing an overseer for an inferior man. As for myself, it makes no difference. But here's what I am d willing to do in order that the meeting and discussion you're eager for may take place. If Protagoras doesn't wish to answer questions, let him ask, and I'll answer, and at the same time I'll try to show him how I claim the answerer should answer. But when I answer as many questions as he wishes to ask, let him again in like manner render an account to me. Now, if he doesn't seem eager to answer the exact question put, you and I will beg him jointly, as you beg me, not to wreck the meeting. And for this there is no need of one single overseer; all will oversee jointly.

e It seemed to everyone that this should be done. Protagoras wasn't very willing; nevertheless, he was compelled to agree to ask questions, and when he'd asked enough, to render an account again by offering short answers.

The Poem of Simonides (338e–347a)

Well, he began his questioning something like this:

I believe, Socrates, he said, that the most important part of 339a education for a man is to be skilled in poetry. But this is to be able to understand what things said by the poets have been rightly composed and what have not, and to know how to distinguish them and render an account when questioned. Specifically, the present question will concern the same subject you and I are now discussing, virtue, but carried over into poetry; that will be the only difference. Simonides somewhere says to Scopas, son of Creon of Thessaly,

b Hard is it on the one hand truly to become a good man,
In hands and feet and mind foursquare,
Well wrought without flaw.

Do you know the lyric, or shall I recite it all to you?

And I said, No need, for I know it; it happens I've studied the lyric quite carefully.

Good, he said. Then do you think it beautifully and correctly composed, or not?

Yes, I said, very correctly.

But do you think it beautifully composed if the poet contradicts himself?

I do not, said I.

Then take a better look, he said.

c Why, I've sufficiently examined it, my friend.

Then you know, he replied, that, as the lyric goes on, he says,

Nor do I suppose it said suitably by Pittacus,
and yet he was surpassing wise:
Hard is it, he said, to be good.[20]

Do you conceive that the same person said this and the foregoing?

I know it, I said.

Then, he said, do you think this agrees with that?

It appears so to me (yet at the same time I was afraid there was something in what he was saying). Doesn't it appear so to you? I said.

d How could anyone who says both these things appear to agree with himself? First he assumed that it's hard to become a good man in truth, but a little further on in the poem he forgot and criticized Pittacus for saying the same thing he said himself, that "it is hard to be good"; he refuses to accept from him the same thing he says himself. And yet, when he criticizes him for saying the same thing as himself, clearly he criticizes himself, so either the earlier or the later claim is wrong.

Well, his saying this provoked loud applause from many of the

e hearers. At first I was blinded and made dizzy by what he said and by the applause of the others, as though I'd been punched by a good boxer. Then—to tell you the truth, it was to gain time to

20. Adam and Adam cite a scholium on *Hippias Major* 304e: Pittacus, when ruler of Mitylene, after hearing that Periander had quickly become a tyrant, asked before an altar to be relieved of his rule, on the ground that "it is hard to be good."

consider what the poet might mean—I turned to Prodicus and
340a called on him: Prodicus, I said, you're a fellow citizen of Simonides; you ought to come to his aid. So I think I'll summon you as Homer claims Scamander summoned Simois when pressed hard by Achilles:[21]

> Beloved brother, let us both join to hold back
> the strength of the man.

So do I also summon you, lest Protagoras wreck Simonides for us. Clearly, correcting Simonides needs that special music of yours by
b which you distinguish wishing and desiring as not the same, and many other fine distinctions of the sort you just made. And now consider whether you agree with me, for it doesn't appear that Simonides contradicts himself. Please, Prodicus, declare your opinion: do you think that to become and to be are the same or different?

Emphatically different, said Prodicus.

Well, said I, in the first lines Simonides declared his own opinion, that it would be hard to become in truth a good man?

c True, said Prodicus.

But surely he criticizes Pittacus, I said, not as Protagoras supposes, for saying the same thing as himself, but for something different. For Pittacus didn't say it is hard to become good, as Simonides did, but that it is hard to be good. But Protagoras, to be and to become are not the same, so Prodicus here says. Yet unless to be is the same as to become, Simonides did not contradict himself. Perhaps Prodicus here and many others would say with Hesiod that it's hard to become good:

d
> For the gods have set toilsome obstacles on the path to virtue.[22]

But when somebody has reached its summit,

> Though hard before, it's easy then to keep.

Well, when Prodicus heard this he applauded me. But Protagoras said, Your correction contains a greater error, Socrates, than what you're correcting.

21. *Iliad* xxi 308–09.

22. Somewhat misquoted from Hesiod, *Works and Days* 289 ff. Cf. *Republic* II 364c; *Laws* IV 718e.

And I said, Then it seems I've done badly, Protagoras, and I'm
e a ridiculous doctor; my treatment makes the disease worse.

Exactly so, he said.

But how? said I.

It would be very foolish of the poet, he said, to thus claim it's a paltry thing to possess virtue. Which is of all things most difficult, as all men suppose.

And I said: Why really, it's opportune that Prodicus here is
341a present for our discussion. For very likely the wisdom of Prodicus is ancient and divine, Protagoras, and either derived from Simonides or even older still. Experienced as you are in many other things, you appear inexperienced in this: you lack the experience I gained from being the pupil of Prodicus here. As it is, I think you haven't understood that Simonides perhaps didn't take "hard" in the sense you do. It's like the word "terrible." Prodicus here always corrects me when in praising you or anyone else, I say that Pro-
b tagoras is a terribly wise man; he asks if I'm not embarrassed to call good things terrible. For what is terrible, he says, is bad; at any rate, no one ever says "terrible wealth," or "terrible peace," or "terrible health," but rather "terrible disease" and "terrible war" and "terrible poverty," because they think what is terrible is bad. Perhaps then the Ceans and Simonides also took "hard" to mean bad, or something else you don't understand. So let's ask Prodicus —for it's right to question him about the dialect of Simonides— What did Simonides mean by "hard," Prodicus?

c Bad, he said.

Then that's why Prodicus, he also blames Pittacus for saying that it's hard to be good, I said. It's as if he heard him say it's bad to be good.

Why, what else do you think Simonides means, Socrates? he said. He's reproaching Pittacus for not knowing how to distinguish names correctly, because he's a Lesbian and raised in a barbarous dialect.

Do you hear what Prodicus here is saying, Protagoras? I said. Do you have anything to say against it?

d And Protagoras said, It's far from being so, Prodicus. I know well enough that Simonides meant by "hard" what the rest of us do—not what's bad, but what's not easy but comes about through many difficulties.

Why, I also think Simonides meant that, Protagoras, said I— yes, and Prodicus here knows it too, but he's joking and means to

test whether you'll be able to support your own argument. Because there's ample proof right in the next line that Simonides didn't mean that the hard is bad. For he says that

e God alone could have this honor.

He surely doesn't mean it's bad to be good: he says god alone can have this, and assigns this honor only to the god. Prodicus would be claiming that Simonides is some sort of scoundrel, and not by any means a Cean. But I'll tell you what I think Simonides intended
342a in this lyric, if you wish to test my grasp of poetry, as you put it;[23] but I'll listen to you if you wish.

Well, when Protagoras heard me say this, he replied, If you wish, Socrates.

Prodicus and Hippias heartily urged me to go on, and so did the rest.

Then I'll try to explain to you what I think about this lyric, I said. Philosophy is most ancient and abundant among the Greeks
b in Crete and Sparta, and sophists are abundant there too. But they deny it and act as if they're ignorant, so that it won't be evident that they surpass the rest of Greece in wisdom, like those whom Protagoras claimed are sophists; instead, they seem to excel in fighting and courage, since they believe that if it were known in what they actually excel, namely, their wisdom, everyone would prac-
c tice it. But now they conceal it, and mislead the Spartanizers in our cities who bind their fists in imitation of them and get cauliflower ears, and go in for physical training and wear short cloaks, as though it were by these means that the Spartans maintain their power among Greeks. But the Spartans, when they wish to meet with the sophists among them freely and grow tired of meeting them in secret, cause an expulsion of foreigners, both these Spartanizers and any other foreign residents among them, and associate with their sophists without foreigners knowing about it. Nor
d do they allow their young people to travel to other cities, any more than the Cretans do, so that the young people won't unlearn what they teach. There are in these cities not only men who pride themselves on their education, but women too. You can tell that what I say is true, and that Spartans are the best educated in philosophy and argument, by this: if one associates with the most inferior Spartan, one at first finds him somewhat inferior in

23. 339a, ἐπῶν. The word Protagoras uses specifically meant epic poetry.

speech; but then at some chance point in the discussion he throws
e in a remark worth noticing, brief and terse, like a skilled marksman, so that the person he's talking to appears no better than a child. Well, there are some, both at present and of old, who recognized
343a that Spartanizing is much more a love of wisdom than a love of physical exercise, knowing that the ability to utter such remarks belongs to a perfectly educated man. Among these were Thales of Miletus, and Pittacus of Mytilene, and Bias of Priene, and our own Solon, and Cleobulus of Lindus, and Myson of Chen, and the seventh of them was said to be Chilon of Sparta.[24] They all emulated and admired and were students of Spartan education, and one could tell their wisdom was of this sort by the brief but memo-
b rable remarks they each uttered when they met and jointly dedicated the first fruits of their wisdom to Apollo in his shrine at Delphi, writing what is on every man's lips: Know thyself, and Nothing too much.

Why do I say this? Because this was the manner of philosophy among the ancients, a kind of laconic brevity. In particular, this saying of Pittacus was circulated in private and highly approved by the wise: It is hard to be good. Well, Simonides, because he was ambitious to be accounted wise, knew that if he could overthrow
c this saying it would be just as if he'd beaten a famous athlete, and he'd become famous himself among the men of his day. So it was in reference to this saying, and for this reason, that he composed the whole lyric, planning to discredit it, as it appears to me.

But let us then all jointly consider it to see if I speak the truth. Surely the very first part of the lyric would appear mad, if he meant to say it is hard to become a good man but then threw in the
d "on the one hand." For this would appear to have been inserted without any reason at all, unless one understands that Simonides is speaking as a controversialist against the saying of Pittacus. When Pittacus says it's hard to be good, he disputes it and says, No, but it's hard to become a good man, Pittacus, truly—not in truth
e good, because he doesn't use the term truth for this purpose, namely, to imply that some things are truly good, others good but not truly so—this would appear simpleminded, and not Simonides —but one must assume that "truly" in the lyric is transposed and meant to introduce the words of Pittacus, as though we were to

24. The Seven Wise Men of Greece.

344a assume that Pittacus himself is speaking and Simonides answering. Pittacus says, Gentlemen, it is hard to be good. Simonides answers, Pittacus, you're wrong: it's not being but becoming a good man, in hands and feet and mind four-square, well wrought and without flaw, that's truly hard.

Thus it appears that the insertion of "on the one hand" has a reason, and that "truly" is correctly placed at the end; and everything that follows testifies that this is what was meant. For there is much about each subject mentioned in the poem to show that it is
b well composed—it's very gracefully and carefully done—but it would take too long to go through it that way. Let us rather explain its general outline and intent, which is more than anything to refute the saying of Pittacus throughout the whole lyric.

For he goes on a little after this to say, as if he were making a speech, that to become a good man is truly hard but possible for at least some period of time. But once having become good, to per-
c sist in this state and be a good man is, as you say, Pittacus, impossible and not human; god alone can have this privilege,

> But it is not possible for a man not to be bad,
> Whom helpless fortune casts down.

Well, whom does helpless fortune cast down in governing a ship? Clearly not the layman, for he's always cast down. Now, just as one
d can't throw somebody who's down, but one can sometimes throw somebody who's standing up so as to put him down, so too helpless fortune may on occasion cast down the man of resource, but not somebody who's always helpless anyway. The pilot might be rendered helpless by a big storm, the farmer by a bad season, and the same for a doctor. Because it's possible for the good man to become bad, as is witnessed by another poet, who says, "But a good man is sometimes bad, and sometimes good." But it's not possible
e for the bad man to become bad; he necessarily always is so. So when helpless fortune overthrows a resourceful and wise and good man, it is not possible for him not to be bad. You claim, Pittacus, that it's hard to be good. Rather, it's hard to become good, though possible, but impossible to be good:

> For every man, when he does and fares well, is good,
> But bad if he does badly.

345a Well, what does doing and faring in letters consist in, and what

makes a man good at letters? Clearly, the study of them. What excellent practice makes a good doctor? Clearly, study of the care and cure of the sick. But, "bad if badly." Who then could become a bad doctor? Clearly, first he must be a doctor, and next, a good doctor; for he alone could also become bad. We laymen in medicine could never by practicing badly become either doctors or
b builders or anything else of the sort; but whoever cannot by practicing badly become a doctor clearly cannot become a bad doctor either. So too the good man could on occasion also become bad, due to time or toil or disease or some other accident—for the only bad practice is to be deprived of knowledge. But the bad man could never become bad, for he's always bad. On the contrary, if
c he's going to become bad, he must previously become good. So even this part of the lyric also tends to this, that it's not possible to be a good man and continue to be good, but it's possible to become good, yes, and for the same person to become bad too; and those best for the longest time are those whom the gods love.

Well, all this is directed against Pittacus, and it's even clearer in the lines which follow in the lyric. For he says,

> Therefore shall I never emptily cast away
> In vain hope my apportioned life,
> Seeking what cannot come to be:
> A man completely blameless
> Among us who reap the fruit of broad Earth.
> If I find him, I'll announce it to you,

d He says—in this way violently attacking through the whole lyric the saying of Pittacus—

> I praise and love all those willingly
> who do nothing shameful.
> Not even gods contend against necessity.

And this is directed to exactly the same point. For Simonides was not so uncultivated as to say he praised those who do not willingly do evil, as though he thought there were people who do evils voluntarily. For I hardly suppose any wise man believes that any
e human being errs voluntarily, or willingly does things shameful and evil; on the contrary, they know full well that everyone who does things which are shameful and evil does them involuntarily. Specifically, Simonides doesn't say he praises those who don't will-

ingly do evils, but applies the "willingly" to himself. For he believes
346a that a good and noble man often compels himself to become a friend and praise someone such as a man estranged from his mother or father or fatherland or something else of the sort. Well, bad men, when this sort of thing happens to them, act as if they were glad to see it, glad to point with blame and accuse the wickedness of their parents or fatherland, so that people may not criticize and reproach them for their neglect because they're so neglectful;
b they find fault with them all the more, and voluntarily add new enmities to those they can't avoid.[25] But good men conceal it and are compelled to offer praise, and if they become at all angry at their parents or fatherland for acting unjustly, they soothe themselves and are reconciled, compelling themselves to love and praise those who are their own.

I think Simonides must often have thought that he himself praised and eulogized a tyrant or someone else of the sort, not
c willingly but under compulsion. Indeed, he says it to Pittacus: I don't find fault with you because I like to, Pittacus, since

> He who is not bad or too helpless suffices for me;
> Knowing justice, the benefit of cities, he is a sound man.
> With him shall I not find fault,—

for I'm no faultfinder,—

> For unlimited in multitude is the race of fools.

So if anyone delights in blaming, he'd have his fill in finding fault with them.

> All things are beautiful in which ugly things are not mixed.

d He doesn't mean this as though he were saying all things are white in which black things are not mixed—that would be in many ways absurd. Rather, he himself accepts things of the middle sort as free of blame. I don't seek, he says, "a man completely blameless among us who reap the fruit of broad Earth, if I find him, I'll announce it to you"; So I'll praise no one for this reason; it's enough for me if he's of a middling sort and does nothing evil, because,

25. Note that by this account bad men act voluntarily, whereas good men compel themselves to become friends to bad men and praise them: this is not the doctrine that wrongdoing is involuntary. Nor is the account of goodness, which amounts to flattery, Socrates' own. He is not only "interpreting" Simonides' poem but offering a parody of sophistical reasoning.

I love and praise all those—

e and there he uses the Mytilenaean dialect, because he's speaking to Pittacus—

I love and praise all those willingly—

the pause should be there, in saying "willingly"—

Who do nothing shameful,

though there are some I love and praise unwillingly. So I'd never
347a blame you, Pittacus, if you'd speak what is middling true and fitting. But as it is, since you speak quite falsely about matters of utmost importance while seeming to tell the truth, I do blame you for that.

I think Prodicus and Protagoras, said I, that this is what Simonides had in mind in composing his lyric.

Interlude (347a–348c)

And Hippias said, I really think you've given a fine explanation of
b the lyric, Socrates. However, I've got an excellent discourse about it too, he said, which I'll display to you, if you[26] wish.

And Alcibiades said, Yes, Hippias, some other time. Now Protagoras and Socrates ought to do what they agreed, Protagoras to question if he still wishes and Socrates to answer; but if he wishes to answer Socrates, for the other to question.

And I said, I leave it up to Protagoras which of the two pleases him. But if he's willing, let's dismiss lyrics and verses; I'd gladly
c complete my inquiry, Protagoras, about the first subjects I asked you about. Actually, I think discussing poetry is much like attending the drinking parties of worthless and vulgar people. They're unable to associate with each other through their own voice and words, due to their lack of education, so they run up the price of
d flute girls and spend a great deal for the alien voice of the flute,[27] and associate with each other through such voices as that. But where the drinkers are gentlemen and properly educated, you'll see neither flute girls nor dancing girls nor harp girls; they're capable of associating with each other in their own voices without

26. Plural. Hippias is addressing the company.

27. Neither "flute" nor "pipe" happily translates *aulos*. The instrument was either single-reeded, like a clarinet, or double-reeded, like an oboe.

this childish nonsense, speaking and listening decorously each in
e his turn even when they've drunk a great deal of wine. So too a meeting like this, if it consists of men of the sort most of us claim to be, has no need of an alien voice, nor of poets who cannot be questioned about what they mean. The Many adduce them in argument, some claiming the poet means this, others that, argu-
348a ing about something they cannot test. But those met in familiar intercourse among themselves dismiss this sort of meeting, and test each other by receiving and rendering accounts in discussions of their own. I think you and I should rather imitate people like that. We should set aside the poets and fashion accounts with one another, putting the truth and ourselves to the test. If you still wish to ask questions, I'm prepared to answer. But if you wish, you can answer me, and arrive at a conclusion about the subject we stopped in the middle of discussing.

b Well, when I said this and other things of the sort, Protagoras gave no indication which of the two things he'd do. So Alcibiades glanced at Callias and said, Callias, do you think Protagoras now does well in refusing to make clear whether or not he'll render an account? For I don't. Let him either discuss or say he refuses to discuss, so that we may understand his position; Socrates can then discuss with someone else, or another of us with whomever he wishes.

c And Protagoras was shamed by Alcibiades saying this, I thought, and by the request of Callias and pretty well everyone present, so he reluctantly returned to the discussion and bid me question him and he would answer.

The Unity of Virtue Revisited (348c–349d)

So I said, Protagoras, please don't suppose I wish anything else in discussing with you except to inquire into what I am myself often perplexed by. For I believe Homer is surely right in saying,

d When two go, one observes before the other.[28]

For we're all somehow more resourceful in every deed and word and thought when we're together. If "a man observes alone," he forthwith goes about seeking someone to show it to, and with whom he can confirm it. That's exactly why I'd rather discuss with

28. *Iliad* x 224.

you than anyone else, believing that you can best examine the subjects a good man naturally considers, and especially virtue. For
e who other than you? It's not only that you suppose yourself to be noble and good; so do some others, who are themselves good but unable to make others so. But you're both good yourself and able to make others good, and so self-confident that whereas others
349a conceal this art, you openly call yourself a sophist and proclaim it to the whole of Greece, declaring yourself a teacher of education and virtue, the first to charge money for it. How then am I not to summon you to inquiry about these things, to question and consult? It's impossible not to. And now, as to those thing I first asked about, I want you to remind me again from the beginning of your
b view about some of them, and to investigate others with your help. The question, I think, was this: whether wisdom and temperance and courage and justice and holiness are five names for one single thing, or whether a certain peculiar nature and reality underly each of these names, a thing in each case with its own power, one not being of such sort as any other. Now, you were saying[29] that they are not names for one thing; on the contrary, each of these names is applied to a thing peculiar to it; but they are all parts of
c virtue, not as the parts of gold are like each other and the whole of which they are parts, but as the parts of the face are unlike each other and the whole of which they are parts, each having a power peculiar to itself. If this still seems true to you as it did then, please say so. If it somehow seems otherwise, please distinguish it, because I won't blame you if you now say something else; I wouldn't be surprised if you said it then to test me.

d But Socrates, he said, I tell you they are all are parts of virtue, and four of them are fairly like each other, but courage is much different from them all. You'll know I tell the truth by this: you'll find that many men are extremely unjust and unholy and intemperate and foolish, but surpassingly courageous.

The Unity of Wisdom and Courage (349e–351b)

e Hold it right there, I said: surely it's worth examining what you mean. Do you mean courageous men are bold,[30] or something else?

29. 329c ff.

30. θαρραλέους: bold, daring. At 359c, τά θαρραλέα = things to be confident, or bold, or daring about, as opposed to τὰ δεινά, things to fear.

Yes, he said, and impetuous, going at what most people fear.

Come then, do you say that virtue is something excellent,[31] and because it's excellent you offer yourself as a teacher of it?

Why, it's most excellent, he said, at least if I'm not mad.

Then is some of it defective[32] and some excellent, said I, or is it excellent as a whole?

Excellent as a whole, surely, as excellent as can be.

350a Now, you know that some people dive boldly into wells?

I do. They're divers.

Because they know how, or for some other reason?

Because they know how.

But some people are bold and confident in making war from horseback? Cavalrymen, or people ignorant of horsemanship?

Cavalrymen.

And some fight with light shields? Skirmishers, or not?

Skirmishers. Yes, and in all other cases, if here's what you're after, he said, those who know are more confident than those who don't, and themselves more confident once they learn than before they learn.

b Have you ever seen someone who didn't know any of these things but was confident in each of them?

Yes, said he, and they're too confident.

These confident people are also courageous?

On the contrary, he said. Courage would then be a defect; because they're mad.

Then who do you say are courageous? I said. Not the confident?

Yes, I still say so, he said.

c Well, these people who are confident in this way,[33] I said, appear to be not courageous but mad? And on the other hand, the wisest here are also most confident, and being most confident, most courageous? And according to this account, wisdom would be courage?

Socrates, you don't properly recollect my answer to you, he said. When you asked me if the courageous are bold, I agreed. But you didn't ask whether the bold are courageous, for if you had, I'd

d have replied, Not all. And you've nowhere shown I was wrong in what I did agree to, that the courageous are bold. Next you show

31. Or beautiful, or noble, or good.
32. Or ugly, base, shameful, bad.
33. Sc., without knowledge.

that those who know are themselves more confident and bold than they were before, and more confident and bold than others who do not know, and in this way you think courage and wisdom are the same. But if you went on this way, you'd also think strength is wisdom. For first if you went on thus you'd ask me whether the
e strong are powerful, and I'd say Yes. Next, you'd ask whether those who know how to wrestle are more powerful than those who don't know how to wrestle, and more powerful after they learn than before. I'd say Yes. But once I agreed to this, you could use these same proofs to claim that, by my agreement, wisdom is strength. But neither there nor anywhere did I agree that the powerful are
351a strong, only that the strong are powerful. For power and strength are not the same; power derives from knowledge, and from madness and anger, but strength from nature and right nurture of the body. So too here, boldness and courage are not the same; so it follows that the courageous are confident and bold, but not surely
b that the confident and bold are all courageous; for men become bold, as they become powerful, from art and anger and madness, but they become courageous from nature and the right nurture of the soul.

That Virtue Is Knowledge

The Hedonic Equation (351b–e)

Do you say, Protagoras, I said, that some men live well, others badly?

He assented.

Then do you think a man would live well if he lived in misery and pain?

He denied it.

But what if he lived out his life pleasantly to the end. Wouldn't you think he has thus lived well?

I would, he said.

c So to live pleasantly is good, unpleasantly bad?

Yes, he said, if one lives being pleased by good things.

Really, Protagoras? Surely you don't, as the majority do, call some pleasant things bad and some painful things good? I mean just insofar as they are pleasant, aren't they in that respect good, unless something else will follow from them? And again, are not painful things in like manner bad insofar as they are painful?

Socrates, he said, I don't know whether I should answer so simply that all pleasant things are good and painful things bad, as
d you ask. On the contrary, I think it's safer for me to reply, looking not only to my present answer but to all the rest of my life, that some pleasant things are not good, and again, some painful things are not bad, but there are some which are, and a third kind which is neither good nor bad.

You call things which partake of pleasure or cause pleasure pleasant? I said.

e Of course, he replied.

This, then, is what I mean: whether they're not good insofar as they're pleasant. I'm asking whether pleasure by itself is not good.

As you often say, Socrates, he said, let's examine it, and if the conjecture seems reasonable, and pleasant and good appear to be the same, we'll concede it. If not, we'll dispute it at that point.

Well, I said, do you wish to lead the inquiry, or shall I?

It's right for you to lead, he said. You began the argument.

The Authority of Knowledge (352a–353b)

352a Well then, said I, would it become clear to us in some such way as this? It's as if one were estimating a man's health or any other bodily function from his appearance; one might inspect face and forearms and then say, "Come, uncover your chest and back and show them to me, so that I may examine you more thoroughly." I want something like that in our inquiry. Seeing that you're disposed toward the good and the pleasant as you claim, I need to say something like this: Come, Protagoras, uncover your thought for
b me on this: how do you stand on knowledge? Do you think of it as the majority of men do, or otherwise? The Many think that knowledge has neither strength nor authority nor power of command, that though knowledge may from time to time be present in a man, it does not govern him. Something else governs: sometimes anger, sometimes pleasure, sometimes pain, on occasion love, of-
c ten fear—as though they conceived of knowledge as a mere slave to be dragged about by everything else. Does something like that also seem true to you? Or is knowledge authoritative, so that if one once knows what is good and evil, he cannot be prevailed upon to do other than knowledge commands—wisdom being sufficient to his aid?

I think it's as you say, Socrates, he replied. Then too, it would be shameful for me, if for anyone, to deny that wisdom and knowledge are of all things most powerful in human affairs.

d Well and truly put, I said. Now, you know that the majority of men don't believe us. They claim that many people know what's best and refuse to do it though it's possible for them, but do something else instead. And when I ask why this is, they reply that people act this way because they're overcome[34] by pleasure or pain, or mastered by other things I just mentioned.

After all, Socrates, he said, people say many other incorrect things too.

e Come then with me and try to persuade and teach people what this experience of theirs is which they claim is being overcome by
353a pleasure, and for that reason not doing what is best, though they know it. Perhaps if we said, "Gentlemen, you don't speak correctly but falsely," they'd reply to us, "Protagoras and Socrates, if this experience isn't being overcome by pleasure, what is it? What do you say it is? Will the two of you please reply?"

Really, Socrates, should we consider the opinion of the Many, who say whatever happens to occur to them?

b I think it's important, I said, for our finding out about courage and how it stands relative to the other parts of virtue. So if you see fit to abide by what we just decided, that I should lead in whatever direction I think it will best become clear, please follow. But if you prefer not, then if you like, I'll dismiss it.

Why you're quite right, he said. Go on as you began.

Reply to the Many (353c–354e)

c Again then if they asked us, I said, "What then do you claim it is which we described as being overcome by pleasures?" I'd reply in this way: "Listen then, for Protagoras and I will try to tell you. Don't you claim, gentlemen, that it frequently occurs, for example when people are mastered by food and drink and sex, which are pleasures, that they know they're bad but nevertheless do them?"

d They'd agree. So you and I would ask them again: "In what way do you claim they're bad? Is it because each of them is pleasant and provides this pleasure immediately, on the spot? Or is it because at a later time they produce disease and poverty, and many other things of the sort? If some of them produce nothing afterward but only cause delight, are they nonetheless evils because they cause us in some way to experience delight?" Do we suppose they could give any other answer, Protagoras, except that they're not evils in

34. ἡττωμένους: to be worsted, defeated.

respect to production of immediate pleasure by itself, but because of what comes later, diseases and the rest?

e I suppose the Many would give that answer, said Protagoras.

Now, in causing diseases they cause pain, and in causing poverty they cause pain? They'd agree, I suppose.

Protagoras concurred.

"Then does it appear to you, gentlemen, that, as Protagoras and I claim, these things are evils for no other reason than because they terminate in suffering and take away other pleasures?" Would they agree?

354a We both thought so.

Again, suppose we asked them the opposite: "Gentlemen, those of you who also say that good things are painful: don't you mean things like physical training and military service, for example, and medical treatment by cautery and surgery and drugs and starvation—these things are good, but painful?" They'd agree?

He concurred.

b "Then do you call them good because they provide the extremity of immediate pain and suffering, or because healthy states derive from them at a later time, good condition of bodies and preservation of cities, and rule over others and wealth?" They'd agree, I suppose.

He concurred.

"Are these things good for any other reason than that they terminate in pleasures and relieve and avert pain? Can you men-

c tion any other end except pleasure and pain to which you look in calling them good?" They'd say no, I suppose.

I think so too, said Protagoras.

"Then you pursue pleasure as being good and avoid pain as evil?"

He concurred.

"So you believe that pain is evil and pleasure is good, although you sometimes say that even delight itself is evil, when it takes away a greater amount of pleasure than it contains or produces pains

d greater than the pleasures in it. Since if you call delight bad with respect to something else and looking to some other end, you could surely tell us what it is. But you can't."

I don't think they can either, said Protagoras.

"Then isn't it the same way again about being pained? Do you sometimes call being pained good, when it gets rid of pains greater than are in it, or produces pleasures greater than the

pains? Since if you look to some end other than what I say when you call being pained good, then you can tell us what it is. But you can't."

e True, said Protagoras.

The Hedonistic Calculus (354e–356c)

Then again, gentlemen, I said, if you were to ask me why I speak at such length about this, and in so many ways, I'd reply, Forgive me. First, it's not easy to explain what it is you call being overcome by pleasures. Second, all explanations depend on this. But it's still
355a possible for you to take it back even now, if you can somehow say what is good is something other than pleasure, or what is evil something other than pain. Or does it suffice to live out your life pleasantly without pains? If it does, and if you can't claim anything else is good or evil that doesn't terminate in these, then hear what follows. For I tell you that if this is so, the argument becomes ridiculous when you say that a man frequently knows that evils are
b evils and nonetheless does them when it's possible not to do them, because he's driven and distracted by pleasures. On the other hand, again, you say the man who knows what is good refuses to do it because he is overcome by immediate pleasures.

That this is ridiculous will be evident if we stop using many names at once—pleasant and painful, good and evil. On the contrary, since they've appeared to be two, let's call them by two names: first, good and evil; alternately, pleasant and painful. Assuming this then, let's say that a man who knows of evils that
c they're evil nevertheless does them. If someone then asks us "Why?" we'll reply, "He's overcome." "By what?" he'll ask us. We can no longer reply, "By pleasure," because it's got another name instead of "pleasure," namely, "good." So let's answer him and say, "He's overcome." "By what?" he'll say. "By the good," we'll emphatically reply.

Well, if the questioner is an arrogant fellow, he'll laugh and
d reply, "You're saying a ridiculous thing, if someone does evils knowing that they're evils without having to do them, because he's overcome by goods. Is this because the goods in you don't weigh enough[35] to conquer the evils, or because they do?" We'll clearly

35. οὐκ ἀξίων. Adam and Adam translate "less worthy," Croiset, "ne méritait pas"; but the sense of inequality in value or worth assumes too much to fit the argument. Though the term usually has moral import, in this context it must retain its root notion of not balancing, not weighing enough.

reply that they don't weigh enough to conquer; otherwise, the man we claim is overcome by pleasure would not have erred. "But how," he'll perhaps reply, "are goods outweighed by evils, or evils
e by goods, except when one is greater, the other less, or one more numerous, the other fewer?" We can't deny this. "so it's clear," he'll say, "that this 'being overcome' you speak of is taking greater evils instead of fewer goods." Well, that's so.

Let's then change the names for these same things back again to pleasant and painful, and let's say a man does—before we said evil things, but now let's say painful things—knowing that they're painful, being overcome by pleasures, it being clear that they don't weigh enough to conquer.

356a And what other inequality of weight is there in pleasure relative to pain except excess and defect one to another?[36] But this consists in becoming larger and smaller than each other, more numerous and fewer, more frequent and less.[37] For if someone should say, "But Socrates, what is immediately pleasant is very different from what is pleasant and painful at a later time," I'd reply to him, "Surely not in anything except pleasure and pain?
b Not possibly in anything else. On the contrary: like a man good at weighing, add the pleasures, add the pains, balance also in the scale the near and the far, and state which is more. For if you weigh pleasures against pleasures, the greater and more numerous must always be taken; if pains against pains, the fewer and smaller; if pleasures against pains, then if the pains are exceeded by the pleasures, whether the near by the far or the far by the near, the action in which they're present must be done; if the pleasures are
c exceeded by the pains, it's not to be done. Isn't it this way, gentlemen?" I'd say. I'm sure they couldn't deny it.

He concurred in this too.

The Art of Measurement (356c–357b)

"Then since this is so," I'll say, "answer me this: Does the same magnitude appear to sight larger when near, smaller when far?"[38]

They'll say Yes.

36. The language here, in which one quantity exceeds or falls short of another, matches that of application of areas in Greek geometrical algebra. The proportion involved is arithmetic.

37. Compare *Laws* V 734a, where pleasures are compared to pains in extent, number, and frequency.

38. Cf. *Republic* X 602d, VII 523c–524d; *Philebus* 42a.

"And so similarly for frequencies and multitudes? And equally, loud sounds are greater when close, smaller when far off?"

They'd assent.

d Then if our doing and faring well consisted in so acting as to take large lengths but avoid small ones, what would appear as the salvation of our life? The art of measurement, or the power of appearances? Doesn't the latter frequently cause us to wander and change back and forth, to accept and reject the same things in actions and in choices of large and small? Whereas the art of measurement would render the appearance ineffective: by mak-
e ing clear the truth, it would cause the soul to be at peace by abiding in the truth, and so save our life? Could people agree it's any other art except the art of measurement that would save us in this?

It's the art of measurement, he agreed.

"But what if the salvation of our life consisted in the choice of odd and even? Whenever it was necessary to choose correctly the more and the fewer, either absolutely or one relative to the
357a other,[39] whether near or far, what would save our lives? Since the art required concerns excess and deficiency, wouldn't it be knowledge and an art of measurement? And since it's about odd and even, would it be anything except the art of arithmetic?" Would these gentlemen agree with us, or not?

Protagoras thought they would.

"Very well, gentlemen: since then the salvation of life has appeared to us to consist in the right choice of pleasure and pain—
b more and fewer, greater and less, nearer and farther—doesn't it in the first place appear to be an art of measurement, an inquiry into excess and deficiency and equality relative one to another?"

Why, necessarily.

"But since of measurement, by necessity it is surely art and knowledge."

They'll agree.

"Now, just what art and knowledge this is we'll consider later; but that it's knowledge by so much suffices for the proof Pro-
c tagoras and I must provide about what you asked us. You asked it, if you recall, when we agreed with each other that nothing is stronger than knowledge and that it always governs pleasure and all the rest wherever it is present. But you then replied that pleasure frequently masters even the man who knows, and when we

39. Cf. *Gorgias* 451b ff.

didn't agree with you, you next asked us this: "Protagoras and Socrates, if this experience isn't being overcome by pleasure, what is it? What do you say it is? Tell us."

d "Well, if we'd told you right off that it's ignorance, you'd have laughed at us; but if you laugh at us now, you'll laugh at yourselves. For in fact you've agreed that those who err do so for lack of knowledge about the choice of pleasures and pains—that is, goods and evils—and not only for lack of knowledge but also for lack of what you've already further agreed is the art of measurement. But you yourselves also know, surely, that errant action without knowl-
e edge is done in ignorance. So that's what being overcome by pleasure actually comes down to—the greatest ignorance. Of which Protagoras here claims to be a physician, and Prodicus and Hippias. But you, through supposing it something other than ignorance, neither go yourselves nor send your children to these teachers, these wise sophists here, because you think it can't be taught. Instead, you worry about money and don't pay it to them, and you do and fare badly in both public and private."

Hippias and Prodicus Agree (358a–b)

358a This would be my answer to the Many. But along with Protagoras, I ask you, Hippias and Prodicus—for let the argument be shared —whether you think I speak truly or falsely.

They all thought what had been said was emphatically true.

So you agree, said I, that the pleasant is good, the painful bad. I beg to be excused from Prodicus's division of names, for whether you say "pleasant" or "delightful" or "enjoyable," dear Prodicus, or apply whatever name you like for such things, please answer with a view to what I mean.

b So Prodicus laughed and concurred, as did the others.

No One Voluntarily Chooses Evils (358b–d)

Then what about the following point, gentlemen, I said: all actions directed toward a painless and pleasant life are excellent? And the excellent product is both good and beneficial?

He concurred.

So if the pleasant is good, I said, no one who knows or thinks that other things are better than what he's doing, and possible, will
c do them if the better things can be done. Being overcome by oneself[40] is nothing but ignorance, mastering oneself nothing but wisdom.

40. τὸ ἥττω εἶναι αὑτοῦ: lack of self-control. Cf. 358c 2.

All concurred.

But don't you then mean by ignorance just this: having false opinion and being deceived about matters of great weight?

All concurred in this too.

Then surely, said I, no one voluntarily goes toward evils or what he thinks are evils, nor is it in human nature, it seems, to be
d willing to go toward what one thinks are evils instead of goods; and when compelled to choose one of two evils, no one will choose the greater if it is possible to choose the less.

All of us concurred in all this.

The Unity of Courage and Wisdom (358d–360e)

Well then, I said, is there something you call dread and fear? And is it what I claim?—I'm speaking to you, Prodicus. I claim it's an expectation of evil, whether you call it fear or dread.

Protagoras and Hippias thought this was dread and fear, Prodicus that it was dread but not fear.

e It makes no difference, Prodicus, I said. But this does. If what was formerly said is true, will any man be willing to go toward what he fears, if it's possible to go toward what he doesn't? Or is it impossible, from what's been agreed? For we agreed that what he fears he believes evil; but what is believed evil one neither goes after nor voluntarily accepts.

359a Everyone thought so too.

Then this being so assumed, Prodicus and Hippias, said I, let Protagoras here defend for us the correctness of his first answer—not his very first, where[41] he said there are five parts of virtue, none of them such as any other but each with its own peculiar power. I don't mean that, but what he said afterward. For afterward[42] he said that four of them are fairly much like each other,
b but one is quite different from the others, namely courage, and he told me I could tell by the following proof: "For you'll find, Socrates, that there are people who are extremely unholy and unjust and intemperate and ignorant, but extremely courageous; by which you'll know that courage is very different from the other parts of virtue." I was much surprised at his answer at the time, and still more so since I've discussed it with you. So I asked him

41. 330a ff.
42. 349d ff.

whether he'd say that the courageous are bold. "Yes, and impetuous," he said. Do you recall giving this answer, Protagoras? I said.

c He assented.

Come then, I said, and tell us: what do you say the courageous are impetuous toward. Toward what cowards are?

No, he said.

Toward different things.

Yes, he said.

Do cowards go toward things to be bold and confident about, the courageous toward things to be feared?

So people say, Socrates.

True, I said. But I didn't ask that, but rather what you say. Are

d the courageous impetuous toward things to be feared believing them fearful, or toward things not to be feared?

But it was just shown in the arguments you put that this is impossible.

True again, said I. So if this was shown correctly, no one goes toward what he believes fearful, since being overcome by oneself was found to be ignorance.

He agreed.

On the contrary, everyone goes toward what they're also confident about, both cowards and the courageous, and in this respect cowards and courageous men go toward the same things.

e But surely, Socrates, he said, what cowards and the courageous go toward is completely opposite. For example, the latter are willing to go to war, the former refuse.

Is it excellent or shameful to go?

Excellent, he said.

Then since excellent, then also good, as we agreed before; for we agreed that excellent actions are all good.

True, and I always think so.

360a And rightly, I said. But which sort do you say refuse to go to war, if it is excellent and good to do so?

The cowards, said he.

Now, said I, since excellent and good, also pleasant?[43]

So it was agreed, at any rate, he said.

43. The consequence that since going to war is excellent and good, it is also pleasant, would seem to be a practical *reductio ad absurdum* of the hypothesis that goodness and pleasure are equivalent. If cowards are afraid with shameful fears (360b), there is a criterion of good and evil other than pleasure and pain, and one needs still to answer the question of the *Laches,* What is courage?

Then do cowards knowingly refuse to go toward what is more excellent and better and more pleasant?

Why, if we agree to that, he said, we'll destroy our former agreements.

What about the courageous man. Doesn't he go toward the more beautiful and better and more pleasant?

It's necessary to agree, he said.

b Now on the whole, courageous men don't fear shameful fears when they're afraid, nor are they confident with shameful confidence?

True, he said.

But if not shameful, are they not excellent?

He agreed.

But if excellent, also good?

Yes.

Then again the cowardly and the rash and the mad, oppositely, fear shameful fears and are confident and bold with shameful confidence?

He agreed.

Are they confident and bold about shameful and bad things through anything other than folly and ignorance?

No he said.

c Now, do you call that through which cowards are cowardly cowardice or courage?

Cowardice, he said.

They appeared to be cowards through ignorance of what things to fear?

Of course, he said.

So they're cowards through this ignorance?

He agreed.

It's agreed by you that it is cowardice through which they're cowards?

He concurred.

Then ignorance of what is and is not to be feared would be cowardice?

He nodded assent.

Moreover, said I, courage is opposite to cowardice.

d He agreed.

Now, wisdom about what is and is not to be feared is opposite to ignorance of these things?

And here he nodded again.

Ignorance of these things is cowardice?

Here he barely nodded.

So wisdom about what is and is not to be feared is courage, since it is opposite to ignorance of these things?

Here he was no longer even willing to nod agreement, and was silent.

And I said, why do you neither affirm nor deny what I ask, Protagoras?

Finish it by yourself, he said.

e I have only one question for you still, said I: do you still think, as you did at first, that some people are extremely foolish but most courageous?

I think you're contentiously eager for me to answer, Socrates, he said. Well, I'll gratify you and say that from what's been agreed, it seems to me impossible.

Conclusion (360e–362a)

I ask all this, I said, for no other reason than my wish to inquire
361a how it is with virtue, and what virtue itself is. For I know that if this once became evident, the issue you and I have each drawn out at such length—I claiming that virtue cannot be taught, you that it can—would be quite cleared up. It seems to me the present outcome of the argument mocks and accuses us as if it were a man; if it had voice it would say, "How absurd you both are, Socrates and Protagoras. You, Socrates, after previously saying that virtue cannot be taught, now for your own part urge just the opposite, un-
b dertaking to show that all things are knowledge, both justice and temperance and courage, from which it would certainly appear that virtue can be taught. If virtue were something other than knowledge, as Protagoras undertook to say, clearly it could not be taught; but as it is, if it turns out to be wholly knowledge, as you urge, Socrates, it will be strange indeed if it cannot be taught. Protagoras, on the other hand, assumed before that it can be taught, but now seems to urge the opposite, making it appear to be
c almost anything rather than knowledge; and thus it would be least of all teachable." Now Protagoras, when I see all this so fearfully agitated back and forth, my whole impulse is to get it cleared up. I would wish us to go on thoroughly to consider what virtue is, and then come back again to inquire whether it can or cannot be

taught—for fear that otherwise that Epimetheus of yours will
d keep on tripping us up and misleading us in the inquiry as he also neglected us in his distribution—so you claim. Well, I like Prometheus more than Epimetheus in the story: I make use of him by exercising forethought for the whole of my own life and worrying about all these things. As I said at the beginning, if you're willing I'd be most pleased to inquire into them with you.

And Protagoras said, I admire your earnestness, Socrates, and
e your way with arguments. Actually, I don't think I'm a bad man in other ways, and I'm least of all men envious; indeed I've told many people that among everyone I've met, I especially admire you far beyond others of your age, and wouldn't be surprised if you became famous for your wisdom. As for these matters, we'll pursue them later when you wish, but now it's time to turn to something else.

362a Why, we must do so, said I, if you think it best. Actually, it's long since been time for me to go where I said, but I stayed to gratify the noble Callias.

Saying and hearing these things, we departed.